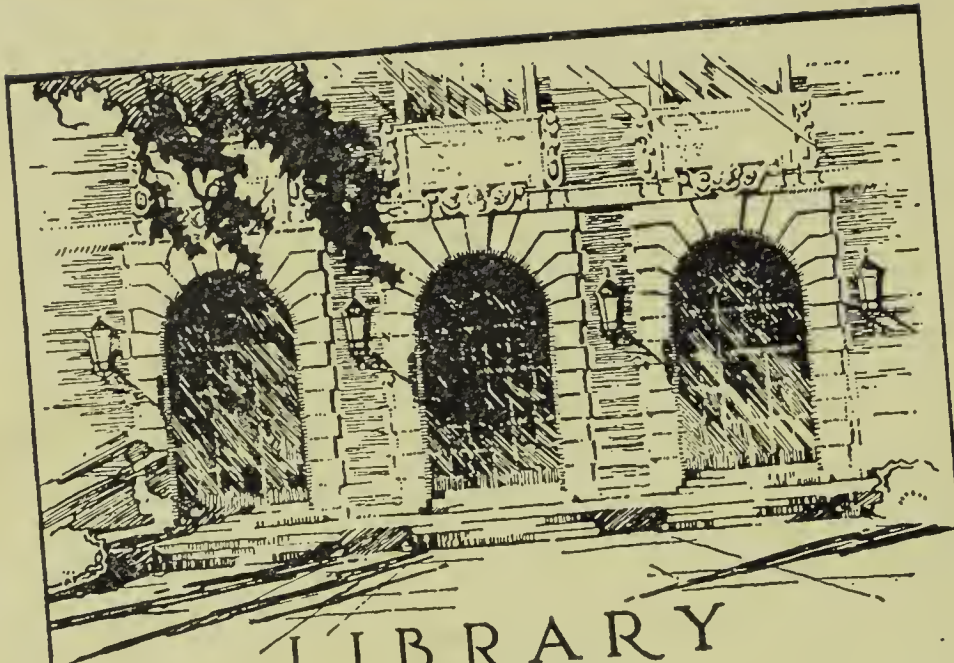


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Thomas Cooper

The Fabrication of the
Pentateuch

2nd ed.



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ILLINOIS HISTORICAL SURVEY

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THE
FABRICATION
OF THE
PENTATEUCH
PROVED,
BY THE
ANACHRONISMS
CONTAINED IN THOSE BOOKS.

BY THOMAS COOPER, LL. D.

Late President of Columbia College, S. C.

SECOND EDITION.

1st ed. was published in 1827 anonymous
only.

GRANVILLE, MIDDLETOWN, N. J.

GEORGE H. EVANS.

1840.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The first edition of this work was published by me, in 1829, from the manuscript of the author, but, at the suggestion of a mutual friend. and, for some reason which I do not now recollect, without the author's name. The recent decease of Dr. Cooper having rendered any further reservation as to authorship unnecessary, and a new edition having for some time been called for, is now offered to the public. The work was much sought after in its anonymous form, and will no doubt be received with additional interest under sanction of the author's well known reputation for learning.

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ILL. HISTORICAL SURVEY

THE
FABRICATION OF THE PENTATEUCH
PROVED.



IN England, geological and physiological disquisitions are manifestly trammelled by the influence of the priesthood of that country. Men of science, such as Dr. Kidd and Dr. Knight, differ from the Mosaic chronology and cosmogony with hesitation. Others, such as Dr. Richardson, Mr. Townsend, Mr. Kirwan, Mr. Buckland, think themselves obliged to preserve their orthodoxy at all events, and to force their facts into a conformity with the Mosaic account.*

I have heard the question put so frequently, "How do your opinions agree with the account given by Moses?" that I am almost compelled in self defence to meet this difficulty in all its strength. I have had repeated and practical experience, that the interference of the clergy in questions of

* [The following article, from the New York Morning Herald, of April 7, 1829, is an evidence that men of science are, in this country, as much trammelled by priestly influence as in England.]

MODERN GEOLOGY.—Public taste has been very much modified within the last thirty years, by the advances made in the exact sciences. The interest excited by the discoveries in natural history—the novelties and mysteries which chemistry has developed, by unravelling the properties of matter—the improvements in mechanics—and the splendid theories of geology, have assumed the first rank in the phalanx of letters; while the prettiness and the garish rhetoric of Della Cruscan orators and poets, have quietly retired, as these strong armed legions of truth presented their demonstrations, and arrayed their proofs.

The series of lectures lately commenced by the New York Lyceum, is an evidence of the ascendancy gained by subjects which appeal to the understanding, in place of those imaginary vagaries, which agitate the heart with fictitious emotions without enlarging the mind, or providing means to fortify it against real troubles.

I have been led to these remarks by the perusal of a work lately published, which does not forget the claims of polite literature in the severity of science; but adhering to fact, and in most instances to regular induction, is yet adorned with deep feeling and genuine eloquence. I allude to professor Silliman's "Outline of Geology." This work is so divested of technicalities, and written in so perspicuous a manner, that it is perfectly intelligible to educated people, and displays that sublime department of science in most interesting lights. The system is proved by professor S. to be consistent with the Mosaic account of the creation and the deluge; thus relieving the apprehensions of those who suspect that *modern geology trenches upon revelation*; while it furnishes facts corroborating the verity of the scripture history. It is a most ennobling study—not of the works and ingenuity of man, or of the influences of his interests and humors—it is an approach towards the presence of the creator—the confines of the burning bush. It presents to our contemplation the primeval chaos, and permits us to an examination of the agencies by which he perfected the astonishing frame of our planet, and the laws by which he sustains it in symmetry and grandeur.

The Lyceum lecturer, Mr. Featherstonhaugh, is a learned geologist, and from his performances much entertainment and information is anticipated.

As geology at present engages the particular attention of scientific investigators in various and remote parts of the globe, it is believed that actual observation will soon complete the development of the system, and brush away any remaining speculations of a visionary or doubtful philosophy.

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science, is always for the purpose of suppressing and not of promoting knowledge; and, on the point now before us, I feel it absolutely necessary for my own peace, that those gentlemen and I should understand one another.

I say, then, that the five books called the *Pentateuch*, viz. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, contain undeniable evidence that they were not and could not have been written by Moses: they are never cited or referred to in the subsequent books of the Old Testament, nor is Moses once alluded to as their author. That they are the compilation of some unknown person—unknown as to the country where he lived, the time when he lived, his name, age, and profession; and the credit due to him. That being destitute of all historical evidence to support them, they are unworthy of credit.

The objections I propose to make to these books, are not entirely my own: I find them partly in the *Tractatus Theologico Politicus* of Spinoza; partly in the *Dubia Evangelica* of Spanheim; partly retailed in the *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament* of Pere Simon; and partly in the first volume of *Recherches Nouvelles sur l'Histoire Ancienne* of C. F. Volney, to which I am principally indebted. I have penned these objections with the Bible before me; and I have taken care to verify, by reference to that book, the facts stated. Of the conclusions from these facts, the reader must judge for himself. I present them not for the purpose of needless disputation, but in sincere and anxious desire to discover truth if I can; and to defend what appears to me, after laborious investigation, deserving of that name.

I. In the 34th chapter of Deuteronomy, ver. 5, 6, it is said, “Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.”

It is manifest Moses could not have written this account of his own death and burial; but there is no hint or suggestion that it has been subsequently added to the main narration.

The phrase, “*unto this day*,” implies a considerable time past between the event narrated, and this narration of it. This is not a solitary passage that might have been interpolated at the end of the book; for it is so often repeated that it is interwoven with the book itself. Thus, Deut. iii. 14, “unto this day.” Gen. xxii. 14, “to this day.”

II. Deut. xxiv. 10. “And there arose not a prophet

since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Compare this with 1 Sam. ix. 9. "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come and let us go to the *seer*; for he that is *now* called a prophet was beforetime called a *seer*." So Samuel, in the 19th verse of the same chapter, says, "I am the *seer*." This application of *seer* continued in use till after the time of David, who calls Gad, *seer*; not prophet. Now, as Moses, throughout the Pentateuch, is called prophet, and not *seer*, the Pentateuch must have been compiled by some one accustomed to the term prophet, after *seer* had gone out of use; that is, after the time of David.

III. But the Pentateuch must have been compiled by some person who probably lived even later: Gen. xxxvi. 31, "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom; *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*." The compiler, therefore, lived after kings were common in Israel.

IV. Moses was not permitted to cross the river Jordan: he was permitted to ascend mount Pisgah, and view the promised land before he died; but he never entered it. Deut. iii. 27—iv. 21, 22—xxxiv. 1, 2, 3, 4.

But the compiler or fabricator of the Pentateuch lived on the other side of Jordan, in the promised land; for he speaks of the country where the transactions of Moses happened, and where Moses lived, as *beyond Jordan*, on the other side of Jordan. See Deut. iv. throughout. Our translators, aware of the objection, have wilfully mistranslated the original, which means *the other side*, by *this side*. The original is *the other side*; the vulgate translation of St. Jerom, is *trans Jordanum*; the Greek of the Septuagint is *πέραν του Ἰορδάνου*.

V. Exod. vi. 2, 3. "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name *Jehovah* was I not known to them."

The compiler forgot himself either in the preceding passage, or in the following: Gen. xxii. 14, "And Abraham called the name of that place *Jehovah-jireh*: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

VI. Gen. xiv. 14. Abraham pursued them unto *Dan*. Now, there was no city named *Dan*, till in the time of the

Judges; the tribe of Dan having surprised and destroyed Laish, they built a city, and called it Dan. Judges, xviii. 27, 29. The book of Genesis, therefore, was not written till after the time of the Judges.

VII. Gen. xii. 6: "And Abraham passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land." In conformity whereto, is Gen. xiii. 7: "and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land."

Now, the Canaanites were not driven out till the time of Joshua; therefore, the compiler of these books lived after the Canaanites were driven out.

VIII. Deut. ii. 12. "The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime, but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; *as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the Lord gave unto them.*" But Israel did not dwell in the land of his possession, which the Lord had given him, until after the victories of Joshua. The compiler, therefore, lived when Israel was in peaceable possession of what *had been* the land of Canaan.

IX. It is strange that no mention or allusion to these five books of Moses can be found, either in the book of Joshua; or of Judges, or in the two books of Samuel, or in the early part of the books of Kings or Chronicles, until the time of Josias, about 850 years after the flight from Egypt!

Solomon preserved the tables of the law, but not a word is mentioned in his day, or the histories of his reign, of these five books of Moses. When Hilkiyah the priest found or pretended to have found them, not a man among the Jews, high or low, learned or unlearned, pretended to have any knowledge of them, except the prophetess Huldah, who being placed in the confidence of Hilkiyah, adapted her exhortations to his views and wishes, as is manifest from the narration.

That a book of such size, of such importance, the work of the national lawgiver, should be unnoticed and unknown for upwards of 800 years, is absolutely incredible, had it really existed previous to the time of its pretended discovery.

X. Moses is said to have written the following works:
a. An account of the two and forty journeys of the Israelites out of Egypt, comprised in the 33d chapter of Numbers.

- b. The book of the law which the Levites were ordered to read to the people every seventh year, at the feast of the tabernacle. Deut. xxxi. 11. This law seems to have been the curses contained in Deut. xxvii. 15, &c.
- c. The ten commandments, written on the two tables of stone, Deut. v. 6—x. 4—Exod. xxxiv. 1, &c. These seem to have been the same with the ten commandments mentioned in Exod. xxiv. 3, &c.; except that in one of the passages, Jehovah is said to have written them on the stone tables, and in the account in Exodus, Moses is said to have written them. At any rate, they were short; for Moses appears to have detailed them to the people in the morning, and to have written them afterwards on the same day. Exod. xxiv. 3, 4.
- d. It should seem, also, that Moses kept an account of the battles in which the children of Israel were engaged during his time; for the compiler of the Pentateuch refers to some such account under the title of the book of the wars of the Lord. Exod. xvii. 14—Numb. xxi. 14. But this is uncertain, for the book of the wars of the Lord is manifestly cited as extant by the compiler of the Pentateuch, who could not have been Moses, from the explanatory notes added in verses 13, 14, 15, which were unnecessary if written by Moses.
- e. Moses is said to have written the song in Deut. xxii. See Deut. xxi. 22. The book of the law mentioned in v. 24 of the same chapter, must have been the same already noticed (in b. and c.)

All the other exhortations of Moses in the Pentateuch are detailed to us as having been *spoken* by Moses, but not *written*. Nor were any of these extant in the time of Solomon, who would have preserved them if they could have been found. 1 Kings, ch. 8, v. 9, is conclusive upon this point. Now, I say, the Pentateuch could not have been written by him; for the people were to be instructed in the commandments of God, and the exhortations of Moses, not by copies of a book distributed that they could read themselves, but by having these commandments periodically read to them by the priests and Levites; so that they must necessarily have been short and concise. Indeed there is not the slightest evidence, now extant, that alphabetical writing was practised or known in the time of Moses any where. An ignorant people constantly engaged in wars with their neighbors, whom they were bent on exterminating, slaves to the Egyptians, then slaves for eight years under Kersan, then for eighteen under Eglon, then for twenty under Jabin, then for

seven under the Midianites, then for eighteen under the Philistines and Ammonites, then for forty under the Philistines, then for seventy under the Babylonians, &c. could have no time or inclination to cultivate letters among the mass of the nation. What knowledge of letters they did possess, must have been confined to their priesthood, with whom alone the sacred books were deposited.

But what is conclusive that the Pentateuch could not have been written by Moses, comprising, as it does, a large volume, is, that there were only two modes of writing known to Moses: one by cutting the words in stone, and the other by tracing them on soft mortar or plaster, which last method he expressly recommends to the Jews. Perhaps the tables of stone used on Mount Horeb were also plastered; for Moses wrote thereon the commandments in one morning, as appears by the passage already cited. 1 Kings, ch. 8, v. 9, it is said, Solomon could find in the ark nothing but the two tables of stone produced at Horeb. That he would recommend to his people the most convenient method of writing then known, there can be no doubt. That method is thus detailed: "thou (the people) shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster, and thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law." Deut. xxvii. 2, 3.

To have written all the didactic part of the Pentateuch, either in one way or the other, would have been nearly impossible; and when written what building could contain this heap of stones, or how were they to be transported? The methods employed preclude the supposition of more than half a dozen pages. When, therefore, the compiler of this collection, or his translator, makes Moses *write the law in a book*, he conforms himself to the language and ideas of his own day, not of the days of Moses. The compiler compiled it, therefore, when books were in common use, if the passage be faithfully translated. There is no evidence of the papyrus being used for writing in the time of Moses, nor for a long time after: had it been used, he would not have recommended plaster or mortar spread upon the surface of a large stone. This is too evident to require further elucidation; but it may be observed, that when Esdras, nine hundred years afterwards, wished to rewrite the law from memory, after it had been burnt, as he declared and alleged, he made use of box wood, and employed five secretaries forty days. Amid these alterations, where shall we find the genuine law of Moses?

XI. But how would a book of papyrus have kept for

eight hundred years, buried in dust and dirt, neglected and unknown? For if it had been carefully kept, it would have been known, resorted to, referred to, cited, read, copied, extracted, revered. But we have nothing of the book of the law, till first brought to light by Hilkiab, who took his own time to compose or compile it, as might best suit his own purposes.

Hence, as the priests of Baal and other Phenician deities interfered greatly with the interest and influence of the Jewish priests of the Mosaic law, in the time of Ammon and Manasseh, the immediate predecessors of Josiah, and also at the commencement of Josiah's reign, we can well account for all the violent denunciations against the Israelites for going whoring after other gods; and particularly the Jeremiad in Deut. xxxviii. 48, &c., which, with strange coincidence, Jeremiah himself has adopted as descriptive of the incursions of the northern Scythæ. Vol. 1 of Volney's *Recherches*, 89.

These proofs might be extended satisfactorily to establish the absolute worthlessness, in point of historical credit, of the five books of Moses, as they are very improperly called. But I shall proceed to accumulate a few more objections, that the question may be set at rest.

XII. Shaphan the scribe went to the king and said, Hilkiab the priest hath given me a book; no enquiry was made, no account was given, how or where Hilkiab found it, or on what authority he presumed it was written by Moses. "And Shaphan read it before the king." Now I appeal to any person, in the slightest degree conversant with languages, whether any man could read off, or any other man understand at once, a book written eight hundred years before! The language and phraseology would necessarily be so altered by time, as to render it unintelligible. It is so with the Latin, French, English, of two or three hundred years interval. Compare the language of the twelve tables with the code of Justinian; the *Poesies de Clotilde*, with the verses of Delisle, or even Chaucer with Dryden and Pope. The whole story shows manifest concert and contrivance between the high priest Hilkiab, his pupil Josiah, the scribe Shaphan, the prophetess Huldah, and the prophet Jeremiah, who appears, from 1 Jerem., to have been a relation. All meant to exasperate the people against the priests of Baal, and frighten them into obedience to the priests of Moses. I beg of the unprejudiced reader to peruse the account in the 2d Kings, ch. 22, and in 2 Chron. ch. 34 and 35, and he will

be convinced that this is a fair conclusion, manifestly resulting from the facts recounted.

Suppose any person of the present day were to produce a book of laws, written in the time of king Ethelbert of England, and promulgated by his authority, would not the learned world require a full and particular account of the book, and the discovery of it, and undeniable evidences of its authenticity, before they would admit it?

But here is a book produced, claiming to be the autograph of the great national lawgiver of the Jews—containing the only authentic history of the transactions of their ancestors—the only title to the national possessions—the only justification of the national incursions into the dominions of their neighbors—their only code of laws, religious and civil—the only authority for the claims of the priesthood—a book that ought to have been periodically read to the people by their clergy appointed so to do—that ought to have been familiar to their learned men and men of rank—produced, for the first time, after an interval of eight hundred years, by Hil-kiah, the priest, who gives no other account of it than, *I found it!!!*

And is this the authority upon which we are required to believe that the Pentateuch, such as we have it, is the real composition of the lawgiver, Moses, penned under the influence of divine inspiration, and upon which we are to be denounced, if we suspect it as deficient in historical authenticity, or scientific infallibility!

But other difficulties remain.

XIII. It is a fact, not disputed at the present day, that the Hebrew spoken by the tribe of Judah, was not the same with the Samaritan dialect used by the other tribes of Israel. This last was the language of the Canaanites or Phenicians, which continued in use in Samaria from the earliest times, and in which the Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch was written, and is still extant. The language used by the tribe of Judah after the captivity, was contaminated with the Chaldee; and written, not in the Phenician, but in the Chaldee character still adopted; while the old Samaritan was the Phenician, or a dialect of the Phenician. There is still extant, also, a Pentateuch in the Hebrew or Chaldee dialect. Now, the Samaritan being the oldest language, and the Chaldaic Hebrew, a dialect gradually introduced among the Jews to its exclusion, it is more likely that the law of Moses should be written in the older, than in the later language. But the book of Hil-kiah was not written in the Samaritan

language, or character, which was held in great disrepute in Judah. It was written in a dialect varying from the Samaritan, and in a character introduced long after the time of Moses.

XIV. But whatever might be the authority, or the contents of the book produced by Hilkiah, it exists no more—it *was burnt*. Hilkiah produced this book about a dozen years before the Jews were carried into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. After many years of Jewish captivity, Artaxerxes and Cyrus sent Ezra, or Esdras, to settle again in Jerusalem, with the remnant that could be collected of the Jewish captives. An account of this return is given in the book of Ezra, among the canonical books of the Bible; and a fuller and more particular account of the same transaction in the two books of Esdras, in the Apocrypha. There are some differences in names and minor particulars, but they are substantially the same.

Esdras gives the following information. 2 Esdras, ch. xiv. v. 19. “Then answered I before thee, and said, Behold, Lord, I will go, as thou hast commanded me, and reprove the people which are present: but they that shall be born afterward, who shall admonish *them*? thus the world is set in darkness, and they that dwell therein are without light. For *thy law is burnt*; therefore, no man knoweth the things that are done of thee, or the works that shall begin. But if I have found grace before thee, send the Holy Ghost into me, and I shall write all that hath been done in the world since the beginning, which were written in thy law, that men may find thy path, and that they which live in the latter days may live. And he answered me, saying, Go thy way, gather the people together, and say unto them, that they seek thee not for forty days. But look thou prepare thee many box trees, and take with thee Sarea, Dabria, Selenia, Ecanus, and Asiel, these five which are ready to write swiftly. (v. 42.) And they sat forty days, and they wrote in the day, and at night they ate bread. (v. 43.) As for me, I spake in the day, and I held not my tongue at night. (v. 44.) In forty days, they wrote two hundred and four books:” of these Esdras was directed to publish openly, all but the seventy last books, which he was to deliver only to such as be wise among the people; and he did so. This is the last passage that relates to the subject. So that the history of the Law of Moses, as contained in the Bible, informs us,

1st. That Moses wrote no long composition; none that would occupy more than a day to read or to write.

2d. That what he did write was either cut upon two tables of stone, or placed in plaster while it was soft; for he would naturally prefer that mode of writing which he chose to recommend to others as the most convenient.

3d. That we have no account of these books of Moses in any part of the Bible, from the time of their original composition till the priest Hilkiah said that he had found them. What Hilkiah found, or what he composed, whether it was in any respect the same as the ancient or modern Pentateuch, no one can tell; for it does not appear that it was ever published, and no trace of it remains.

4th. A few years after Hilkiah had produced this, his edition of the Law of Moses, the Jews were carried into captivity, where they had no means of becoming acquainted with the law, or of observing it; indeed, either during the invasion of the Babylonians, or during this captivity, the law *was burnt*, and no copy of it remained; and Ezra, or Esdras, was obliged to dictate from memory the whole history of the world from the beginning, as well as the history and law of the Jewish nation. Except this book, so dictated by Esdras, we know of no other that relates to this question; and he, therefore, was the probable author of the present Pentateuch, so far as history throws any light on the question. I say the probable author, because there is nothing like certainty attached to any part of the historical testimony relating to the books called the Pentateuch. All that is certain about them, is, that they are forgeries; but when, or by whom, depends upon uncertain evidence. The following considerations also induce me to regard Esdras as the author of them:

Because, no book of the law existed when he undertook to compose one from recollection; the book that did exist was burnt. This is likely to have been the case.

Because, as Esdras suggested, the Pentateuch begins with a history of the world from the creation, manifestly Chaldean.

Because, the book of the law compiled by Ezra, or Esdras, took him seven days to read to the people; which agrees with the size of the present Pentateuch. Nehem. viii. 18.

Because, the double account of the creation in our common Bibles, is manifestly a Chaldee tradition, tacked to the Jewish history, without any connection with it. Chaldee, from speaking of God in the plural, Elohim, gods—Chaldee, because it agrees with the Phenician and Chaldee writers as cited by Josephus, Alexander Polyhistor, and Eusebius—Chaldee, because Ezra, or Esdras, who was educated if not born in Babylon during the captivity, would derive all his

knowledge from the Chaldee writers of repute in his day—Chaldee, because it is manifestly no part of the Jewish history or traditions; Moses would never have used the expression Elohim, the gods—Chaldee, also, because the Jews during their captivity, those who attended to literature at all, would be conversant in the Chaldee literature; and the Chaldee traditionary cosmogony would be fashionable in the time of Esdras. I am aware that to these objections four replies will be made; perhaps many more.

It will be said, that all these are old objections, that have been often and long ago refuted. To this I answer, it is not true. They never have been refuted, and cannot be refuted by fair argument. The hardihood of assertion applied to them would astonish any unprejudiced reader, not acquainted with the clerical mode of treating these subjects.

It will be said, the contradictory passages are interpolations. To this I answer, they are incorporated with the rest of the books; they are founded on the same evidence; they appear as parts of one whole; there is no mark but the forgetfulness that dictated them, by which they are to be distinguished from the rest of the works wherein they are found. Such an objection would prevent all examination of the authenticity of testimony or evidence, from the contradictions or inconsistencies it may contain. Those who tell us these are interpolations, should inform us when they took place, how, by whom, and for what purpose. The passages objected to are no more than reasonable explanations of the text, if written, as I presume they were, by some author long after the date of the original transactions.

It will be said, that the book of Esdras is an apocryphal book. To this I answer, there is no known criterion of the books called apocryphal; every ancient ecclesiastical author, and every great division of Christians, have different notions of books canonical and books apocryphal. There was no proposal of a Christian canon till Melito, Bishop of Sardis, in the year 170; nor any canon settled on ecclesiastical authority till the council of Laodicea, in 463, P. C. Further, the book of Esdras is considered as canonical by the Greek church, who are just as competent judges as any other church. Further, it is of more authority than the book of Ezra; the book of Ezra is canonical; the book of Nehemiah is canonical; both of these books give an account of the same transactions that Esdras does. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are quite contradictory, each being the hero of his own story, and the prime agent in the transactions narrated, and hardly making mention of the other. So that, though both

be canonical, it is impossible that both should be true. The reader can compare them in an hour's time. Esdras gives an account of the same transactions, with fewer contradictions; he is therefore more worthy of credit than either. The common opinion is, that Esdras and Ezra are the same person. As to Nehemiah the Tirshatha, as he calls himself, he could not have been the author of the book ascribed to him, as it now appears; for in Nehem. xii. 22, he mentions Jaddua the priest, and Darius the Persian, (Darius Codomannus,) who did not flourish in the world for one hundred years afterwards.

It will be said, that there is as good evidence of the authenticity of the Pentateuch, as of the works of Herodotus, Livy, Plutarch, and many other ancient historians, whose writings are now generally believed to contain faithful accounts of the facts which they detail. To this I answer, that in so far as these historians narrate occurrences within the bounds of probability, nothing can be said against admitting their testimony. But whenever they exceed this; whenever they speak of events taking place which are known to be contrary to the laws of Nature, and, therefore, false, we reject these parts of their histories. In like manner, we refuse to credit the wonderful and miraculous stories told in the Jewish books, while we readily assent to anything they contain which we know, from experience and observation, to be founded in truth.

Herodotus informs us that, on one occasion an *ox* spoke when they were leading it to be sacrificed; and on another, that a *crow* prognosticated or foretold the misfortunes which attended the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. The same historian gravely assures us, that the marble statues of the gods, which had been set up in the temples, at one time sweat great drops of blood. We at once smile on reading these absurdities; but what is there more absurd in the narrative than in that of the Bible, where we are as gravely told that a serpent and an ass spoke; that all the water in the land of Egypt was turned into blood; that the Lord rained bread from heaven for forty years, and that, during the whole of that period, the shoes and garments of the Israelites neither needed to be repaired nor renewed. The individual who is so credulous as to believe all this on the authority of the Jewish books, has no better evidence of its truth than he has of the truth of what the Roman historian has written. If one ought to be rejected as fabulous, so ought the other.

There is also this difference between the works of Herodotus, Livy, and Plutarch, and the books attributed to Moses:

that the latter is said to have been specially commissioned, and instructed by God himself to write these books, while the former have no such pretensions. It therefore requires evidence to support the authenticity of the Pentateuch, of a nature far more conclusive and satisfactory than that required to give currency to the works of mere historians. Before we can believe that Deity inspired any writer to communicate his will to man, we must be satisfied, from internal as well as external evidence, that the writing offered us, claiming so high a character, is every way worthy of an infinitely wise and perfect being. Does our examination of the five Jewish books convince us that we ought to view them in that favorable light? Or, rather, have we not seen that they are totally destitute of that sort of evidence which would entitle them to be received in any court of judicature in the world? Independent of the numerous facts, by which it is demonstrated that Moses could not be their author, do not the books themselves afford sufficient evidence that they are unworthy of the countenance of any intelligent being? Is not the book of Genesis a collection of absurd and frivolous tales? And where is the history to be found to corroborate the statements of the book of Exodus, or any other of the books composing the Pentateuch? Can any one, possessing common sense, believe that the Almighty would dictate such ridiculous things concerning himself as are narrated in these books? Sometimes he is represented as a laborer, toiling and exhausting himself to such a degree that he requires *rest* to recruit himself; sometimes as a tailor, regulating the dresses of the creatures he had formed; sometimes as a fringe or tassel maker, decorating a petty box of wood called their ark, or tabernacle; sometimes as their warrior and generalissimo, when, without provocation, they invaded and plundered their neighbors. When they prayed, he came and talked to them; when they sacrificed, he came and eat with them; and, as is even at this day ignorantly imagined, God had nothing to do but to be constantly at the elbows, and to attend to the wants and wishes of the most savage, barbarous, and ignorant nation of which we have any account in history.

Mr. Jones, in his account of the canon of the Holy Scriptures, lays down the following criteria or tests, by which we may determine whether books are apocryphal or spurious, viz.

That book is apocryphal which contains any contradictions.

Or, any histories contrary to those known to be true.

Or, any doctrines contrary to those known to be true.

Or, relations ludicrous, trifling, fabulous, or silly.

Or, which mentions facts that occurred later than the time of the author to whom it is ascribed.

Or, whose style is manifestly different from the known style of its supposed author.

Or, which is written in an idiom or dialect different from that of the author to whom it is ascribed, or different from the idiom of his country.

Or, that manifests a disposition different from the known disposition of the supposed author.

Or, which for the most part is transcribed from some other author.

To all this I accede; but I fear, if all these tests of authenticity should be adopted and insisted on, we should have dreadful havoc made in the canonical authority of many books that now pass through the world with a very orthodox character. I might use many of these criteria in the present controversy; but I want to intermeddle no farther than to secure my professional opinions, as a geologist, from unfair and unfounded denunciation.

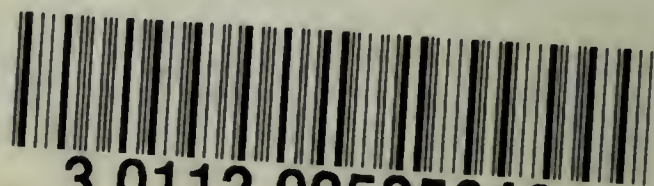
The cosmogony attributed to Moses, I regard as the traditional account of the Chaldee sages; containing some absurdities too manifest to require exposition or refutation; at the same time, as an account agreeing in many points, also, with the best observed facts of modern science.

But whether my own opinions agree or disagree with the account given in the book of Genesis, is to me matter of no moment; because I consider that book, and the other four books attributed to Moses, and called the Pentateuch, as placed to his credit without any sufficient authority for so doing. In this respect, they are, in my view of the subject, *forgeries*. I therefore hold it needless to enquire how far they would have been binding, had Moses really been the author.

End

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